

LITERARY CURIOSITIES.

Old Songs and Proclamations—Collections of Bindings—Simoniades and His Forgeries.

The sales of rare and curious books in the London market have been frequently described; but a writer in the *Cornhill Magazine* adds to list of this kind an interesting account of collections of old songs and proclamations.

SONGS.

"Not worth an old song" is a saying of questionable force. Three volumes of very rare and curious ballads were sold at Mr. Gutts' sale in 1868 for thirty guineas each. In 1866, a collection of four hundred romantic, legendary, amateur, and historical broadside ballads, printed in black letter, some time between the middle and the end of the seventeenth century, once in the Heber collection, were purchased by Mr. Dindorf for £5,000. The University of Oxford, the honor of giving this valuable book to the world, and work was accordingly begun under the editorship of the professor. Before many sheets, however, were struck off, notice came that the printing was to be stopped. Lepsius naturally anxious to know how far Urania supported or denied some of the theories about Egyptian history, and the like, was as well as amused to find that the book was still in print, though its price, in proportion, was the same given for some old ballads at Mr. Daniel's sale. They were seventy in number, printed between 1559 and 1607, in most beautiful condition, and yielding to no other collection in interest or variety. Mr. Daniel gave a detailed account of them in the *Illustrated London News*, 1866. The price they were sold for in 1864 was £750. The Society of Antiquaries has a collection, and there are five or six others, all printed, collected by Pepys. They are divided into heroic, romantic, hunting, love pleasant, and love unfortunate. A few of them are old, but mostly they are of the times of Charles I and Charles II.

PROCLAMATIONS.

Proclamations, when they are offered for sale, bring large prices. A beautiful volume, in Dr. Bandinel's collection, of the proclamations of Charles I, from 1625 to 1633, sold for £21. Six volumes belong to the reign of Elizabeth, James I, Charles I, and King Louis XIV. brought in 1858, the more moderate sum of £12. The most complete collection in existence of the original black-letter broadside proclamations of the Irish Government, commencing with the year 1673, and extending through the reigns of Charles II, James II, William and Mary, Queen Anne, and George I, to the year of 1716, was bought at the sale of Dr. Crane, of Kilkenny, 1858, for the Marchioness of Ormonde, for £76. But such volumes have fetched much larger prices than these. I have heard of one picked up on an old bookstall for half a crown, selling for £120. There is a very fine collection of proclamations in the library of the Society of Antiquaries. In the Bodleian is the magnificent volume of Elizabethan proclamations, and the library of Queen's College, Oxford, has a collection which is nearly, if not quite, matchless, ranging from 1558 to 1694. It contains more than one thousand proclamations, to say nothing of a very large collection of acts, ordinances, etc., issued during the Commonwealth. The only portion in which it is weak is the time of Charles I. But in addition to this, the same library possesses two more voluminous, containing a series of proclamations, mostly printed and partly in manuscript, from the time of Henry VII to 1641. Many of the manuscripts are the original draughts as prepared for the Privy Council; some of the Elizabethan ones having corrections in the handwriting of Mr. Secretary Cecil, and some of the Caroline ones in that of Mr. Secretary Windesbank. Two of them are the original copies in vellum, with the signature of Charles I. But perhaps the most interesting paper in the collection is a copy of the only proclamation issued by Lady Jane Grey. It is a sound, what I dare say, beginning, "In the grace of God, Queen, etc." dated "June 10, 1553." Graton lost his privilege as Queen's printer in consequence of having printed it. It was at one time supposed to be unique. Another copy, however, has turned up, which is now in the possession of the Antiquarian Society; but it is not to be compared with the beautiful copy at Queen's.

Very curious and interesting proclamations turn up sometimes. Not long since one was secured for the Bodleian Library at Windsor, of Queen Mary, declaring herself to be *coemere*. The Bodleian possesses the proclamation dictated by the Spaniards just before the Armada, declaring their intentions when they had conquered England. Among those exhibited in the show-case in the British Museum is that of King Charles II, ordering the suppression of two of the works of Milton, who is therein stated to have been dead from justice; that issued September 15, 1674, offering £100,000 for the apprehension of Prince James should he attempt to land in England, and that issued August 22, 1674, by Charles Edward, "Prince of Wales," offering £30,000 for the apprehension of the "Elector of Hanover."

BINDINGS.

Book collectors sometimes have a fancy for bindings. Towards the end of the first century very beautiful bindings were made for the Medicis, the Dela Rovere, the D'Este, and other noble families. Aldus, the famous printer of Venice, was perhaps the first to issue books in different styles of covering, to suit the tastes and purse of his customers. There are very early bindings which appear to have been stamped from engraved blocks, of wood engraving than the Speculum of Christopher.

One of the first collectors whose bindings are sought after is Michael Majoli; but it was his son, Thomas Majoli, whose devices and style of ornamentation were first imitated by foreign bookbinders. Upon his books is found the inscription, "Thio, Majoli et amicis." Besides this, there is his motto, which was generally "Inimici mei inimici, non me inibi;" and more rarely, as an example in the British Museum, "Ingratis servire nephas." At the Libri sale, in 1859, where there were so many magnificent specimens of bindings, one volume sold for £9; another, at the Bergeret sale, produced £10.

A LITERARY FORGER.

The same writer says that M. Simoniades is by far the most accomplished literary forger of modern times. He came from the island of Syrene, opposite Corfu, and made his first publication at Constantinople, where he offered some manuscripts for sale which he said had been carried on secretly from Mount Athos. A commission which was engaged to examine them reported favorably, especially upon a manuscript of Homer, which was accordingly purchased at a high price. Before very long it was discovered that the text of this ancient manuscript was *Wolff*, with all the *errata*. His subsequent career is thus traced:

"Next he appeared at Constantinople, where he tried hieroglyphics, cameiform inscriptions, and Armenian characters, but somewhat unsuccessfully. Nothing daunted, he tried a new device, and came out a master Don Quixote. He declared that at a certain spot all Arabic MS. in syrian characters would be discovered by digging. Workmen were accordingly employed, Simoniades himself not being allowed to descend. By-and-by a ruse was made for lenechon, and not long afterwards Simoniades called out, 'There it is! bring it up.' The soil about it, however, was somewhat different from that of the ground. The workmen were grinning, and when interrogated concerning what had happened, the Greek came out for a short time, jumped into the pit, and began to burro." He next made his appearance in England, with among other wonderful treasures, a MS. of Homer on serpent's skin, which professed to have been sent from Chios to Hippocrates, son of Phestratus. This and several others he persuaded Sir T. Phillips to purchase. Almost the only library which he failed to

cheat were the British Museum and the Bodleian. On visiting the latter place he showed some fragments to Mr. Cox, who asserted to their belonging to the twelfth century. "All these, Mr. Cox, belong to the tenth or eleventh century." "Yes, probably." "And now, Mr. Cox, let me show you a very ancient and valuable MS. I have for sale, and which ought to be in your library. To what century do you consider this belongs?" "This, Mr. Simoniades, I have no doubt," said Mr. Cox, "belongs to the nineteenth century." The Greek and his master disappeared.

"The time of regal and palimpsest manuscripts was sent to Berlin, profiting by the talents of the king of Egypt in Greek, by Ulysses, and four hundred romantic, legendary, amateur, and historical broadside ballads," printed in black letter, some time between the middle and the end of the seventeenth century, once in the Heber collection, were purchased by Mr. Dindorf for £5,000. The honor of giving this valuable book to the world, and work was accordingly begun under the editorship of the professor. Before many sheets, however, were struck off, notice came that the printing was to be stopped. Lepsius naturally anxious to know how far Urania supported or denied some of the theories about Egyptian history, and the like, was as well as amused to find that the book was still in print, though its translation into very bad Greek of portions of the writings of Bunsen and himself. Simoniades then examined the manuscript with his microscope, and discovered that the palimpsest was really later than the modern one—the old ink overlaid the new."

PROPOSALS.

PROPOSALS FOR FORAGE.

DEPT. OF QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE, NEW YORK CITY, OCTOBER 18, 1867.

Sealed Proposals will be received at this office until 12 M. on WEDNESDAY, October 26, 1867, for the supply of the following articles of Quartermaster's stores at the rate or rates per hundred weight:

B. & O. Railroad Depot; Sixth street Wharf, or, Lincolnton Depot; 10th and Franklin Street.

Two hundred and twelve thousand pounds of good, sound, clean Oats, in good strong sacks, each sack containing one hundred pounds.

56,000 pounds of prime Timothy Hay, loose or in bales.

For Freight or Pay-off.

For THOMAS WATSON & SONS, No. 10 N. DELAWARE Avenue,

10 M. A. M.—Accommodation for Reading and intermediate stations.

12 P. M.—Accommodation for Philadelphia, Reading, Leavenworth, and intermediate stations.

1 P. M.—Accommodation for New York.

2 P. M.—Accommodation for Reading and intermediate stations.

4 P. M.—Accommodation for Philadelphia, Reading, and intermediate stations.

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